

May 31, 2005

Ms. Betsy Cooper  
NPDES Administrator  
King County Dept. of Natural Resources & Parks  
201 Jackson St. MS KSC-NR-0512  
Seattle, WA 98104-0512

Dear Ms. Cooper:

Thank you for your public comment email received on November 22, 2004, regarding Washington State's Water Quality Assessment for 2002/2004. The department received over 45 comment letters during this last review process and is appreciative of the time you took to review and comment on this assessment. We realize that there is an extensive amount of information in the Water Quality Assessment. The scrutiny given by you and other public reviewers has resulted in many changes and corrections that improved the accurateness of the final submittal to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The Water Quality Assessment is being submitted to EPA as an "integrated report" to meet the Clean Water Act requirements of sections 305(b) and 303(d). EPA will only take approval action on Category 5 of the assessment, which represents the state's 303(d) list. The Water Quality Assessment can be viewed at <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/wq/303d/index.html>.

Your comments regarding dissolved oxygen listings for Puget Sound that appeared to be naturally occurring, as well as the additional information received from Pam Bissonette of your department, were very helpful in determining that these listings have naturally occurring historic low dissolved oxygen levels and should not be considered impaired. A review by our Ecology marine unit confirmed your information and data, and these listings were moved to Category 1.

While not a part of your November 11, 2004 email, I also wanted to verify that the listing for the sediment bioassay from the West Point area, based on King County data, will remain on Category 2. The information that you provided after our conversation on March 17 at the Water Quality Partnership was helpful in determining that the follow up work King County has done (based on the sediment chemistry and benthic infauna data for this area) raises legitimate questions about the validity of these bioassay hits. We understand King County will continue to evaluate these hits with an extensive sediment monitoring effort starting in the fall of 2005. We appreciate King County's continued proactive work in determining where problems may be occurring.

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Thank you again for taking the time to provide comments to Ecology. If you have questions regarding the above responses, or would like further clarification, please feel free to call me at 360-407-6414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan Braley". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Susan Braley  
Unit Supervisor  
Watershed Management Section